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SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

JUSTICE FOR ODAG, OPDAT, ICITAP, CRM  
STATE FOR NEA/I, INL/I

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KJUS](#) [IZ](#) [KCRM](#) [PTER](#)

SUBJECT: ATF Promotes Standards in Iraqi Post-Blast  
Investigations

REF: 09 Baghdad 2709

**¶1.** (SBU) Summary: The recent series of high-profile Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Devices (VBIED) in Baghdad has highlighted the Iraqi Ministry of the Interior's urgent need for an incident command system that helps ensure the safe and necessary collection of evidence and facilitates follow-on investigation and prosecution. On February 11, the Embassy's Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) Attaché was one of three presenters at a U.S. military Iraqi Transition Assistance Mission- sponsored (ITAM) incident command seminar reaching 90 senior MOI Police officials including numerous provincial police chiefs. MoI Director of Operations Staff Major General Abdul Kareem expressed his ministry's desire to improve in this critically important area and acknowledged what ATF and other USG officials have identified as a key investigative gaps. With VBIEDs a constant threat to Iraqi stability and security, ATF will continue its efforts to cultivate MOI capacity to properly conduct effective post-blast investigations. End Summary.

**¶2.** (SBU) On February 11, ITAM hosted a successful one-day seminar on implementing an effective incident command system allowing safe and proper site exploitation and evidence collection. The conference focused specifically on high profile explosive incidents such as VBIEDs. The topics included an overview of the incident command system common in the U.S and evidence exploitation protocols. ATF Attach closed the session with a discussion of his first-hand observations from multiple explosive incidents both in Iraq and the U.S., offering insight on its implementation in Iraq.

**¶3.** (SBU) Reflecting the rising number of VBIED incidents specifically in Baghdad, post has argued for the continuation of ATF support in Iraq (reftel). Additionally, the GoI has increased its requests for security assistance from the Embassy in the area of explosives exploitation and post-blast investigation, and it has recognized the ATF Attach office as having "overall responsibility for all counter-Improvised Explosive Device (IED)- related assistance to the GoI. ATF's support for the Incident command seminar further underscores the Embassy's capacity building goal in this important area.

**¶4.** (SBU) Multiple MoI entities have conducted VBIED investigations during the past six months The investigations focused primarily on interrogations and confessions, often ignoring the collection and

potential analytical value of forensic evidence. In fact, the evidentiary summaries provided by MoI's General Counter Explosives Directorate (GCED) misidentified the explosive materials used in the August 19 and October 25 attacks. The Iraq National Intelligence Service (INIS) report, completed within 48 hours of the October 25 bombings, misidentified the explosive materials, causing additional confusion throughout the MOI ranks and specifically at the deputy minister level.

¶5. (SBU) Frictions between the MoI and the Ministry of Defense over who will assume on-scene command and which MoI directorate will lead both the scene and follow on investigation remain a impediment to effective crime scene management. The allocation of the Qto effective crime scene management. The allocation of the necessary resources and time to properly control, manage and process a crime is critical to the safety of responding Iraqi police officers and civilians, who often gain unneeded and uncontrolled access to crime scenes, contaminating the scene, and opening the damaged facility to looting.

¶6. (SBU) Comment: VBIEDs remain the insurgents' top weapon against the GoI. Enhanced crime scene management is critical to apprehension and prosecution of these terrorists. The seminar was an important first step in advancing GoI post-blast exploitation and response capabilities. With the impending withdrawal of U.S. military forces, similar capacity building efforts that review known gaps in the GoI's response to high profile VBIED attacks are critical to the USG's mission in Iraq. End Comment

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